THE

FE AND GROWTH

OF THE

RITISH EMPIRE

By J. A. WILLIAMSON

THE BRITISH EMPIRE

Papua
Brit. New Guinea
New Zealand
(Mollweide's Projection)
Australia
Hong-kong
Burma
Brit. N. Borneo
Malaya
Ceylon
India
Palestine
Aden
Brit. Somaliland
Cyprus
Anglo-Egyptian Sudan
Uganda
Kenya
Tanganyika
N. Rhodesia
Nyasaland
S. Rhodesia
Bechuanaland
Union of S. Africa
Brit. Cameroons
Brit. Togoland
Gold Coast
Gambia
Sierra Leone
Gibraltar
United Kingdom and N. Ireland
Eire
Newfoundland
Canada
West Indies
Jamaica
Trinidad
Brit. Guiana
Brit. Honduras
Falkland Is.
(Pacific Islands not shown)

Self-governing Dominions
Approaching Dominion Status
Crown Colonies
Mandates

THE
LIFE AND GROWTH
OF THE
BRITISH EMPIRE

J. A. WILLIAMSON

In Oxford Pamphlet No. 2, *The British Empire*, Mr. H. V. Hodson has described the Empire as it is to-day, and has defined the status of the different members of the Commonwealth and their relations to each other. Dr. J. A. Williamson, in this pamphlet, describes how the various parts of the Empire were acquired, and gives an outline of its growth since 1783, when the American Colonies were finally lost. He also traces the development of imperial sentiment and theory, from the early nineteenth-century mixture of humanitarianism and commercial zeal, through the pessimism of the middle of the century when it was popularly held that the Empire was on the verge of breaking up, to the outburst of Imperialist fervour at the end of the century, and the sobering shock of the Boer War, followed by the growth of Dominion status, encouraged by the comradeship of the Great War, and culminating in the Statute of Westminster of 1931.

Dr. Williamson is well known as an authority on Imperial History, and especially of the history of maritime expansion. He is the author of many standard books, and joint editor of *The Pioneer Histories*

THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

I. FOUNDATION

The Empire in 1783

THE origins of the British Empire lie four centuries back, but for a view of its modern development we may take our departure from that decisive year 1783, when Great Britain acknowledged by treaty the independence of her former American colonies.

American Independence left a great gap in the ancient structure, but nevertheless important parts remained. First, there were the British West Indies. Jamaica, the largest, was only half the size of Wales, and the others were mere dots in the ocean. But in the estimation of the eighteenth century they were valuable out of all proportion to their size. They were, in fact, examples of intensive cultivation in a favourable climate.

The West Indian planters grew sugar by forced labour. At one time the labourers (slaves in all but the name) had been Englishmen transported for crime or taken prisoner in rebellions and civil wars. Afterwards negroes were captured in Africa and taken across the Atlantic as slaves. Slave-owning admits of no defence, but the early slave-owners would have attempted none, for their world did not consider the practice wrong. England did make a considerable sacrifice to end it when at length she realized its evils.

On the other or African side of the Atlantic,

Britain held only some coastal forts at which the negroes were collected for service in the West Indian plantations; while in the gateway between Africa and Europe she had Gibraltar as a naval base.

Farther north, in the latitudes of the British Isles, lay what was left of British North America: Newfoundland, the fishing island; Nova Scotia, fronting the Atlantic on the mainland; and Canada, which then meant, not the great dominion of to-day, but only a strip on either bank of the St. Lawrence, with a fringe of forts for defence against the Indians to the westward. This small Canada was inhabited chiefly by Frenchmen, and ruled by British officials advised by a council containing French representatives.

Such was the British Atlantic empire of 1783, scattered and fragmentary and of diverse origins. Some of its units, like Bermuda and Barbados, began as breakings-in of the virgin waste. Others, like Jamaica and Canada, were the prizes of war with competing colonial nations. And in that warlike competition England had in the end lost a great deal more than she had gained.

Elsewhere in the world, India was the only scene of British activity. The position there may be broadly described as a British sovereignty of some seaports and of one great province, Bengal, together with a guiding influence in others. All those ruling rights, such as they were, had been reluctantly acquired by the East India Company. Its sole original interest had been trade, it had fought only to defend its trade, and it ruled only because the alternative was an anarchy of military adven-

turers. It had no enthusiasm either for fighting or ruling, and constantly enjoined its servants to avoid fresh commitments by every means in their power.

Upon these rudiments the modern British Empire was to be founded, and we may now consider the history of that process.

New Settlements at the close of the eighteenth century

First, there were two new movements for settlement that afterwards led to greater things. In the United States there were a large number of men who had held to the old cause and had fought for George III in the War of Independence. There was no room for them in the new republic, and they had to go. History knows them as the United Empire Loyalists, the losing side in what had been in some respects a civil war. They went northwards, into half-empty Nova Scotia, into the completely waste region which they peopled under the name of New Brunswick, and into another waste region called Ontario, where they made a British Canada to the south-west of the French Quebec.

The other movement entailed a much longer journey, to the fertile east coast of Australia which Captain Cook had examined in 1770. Philanthropists in England were demanding reform in the prisons, which were crowded and pestilent. The Government tried the experiment of transporting the convicts to a healthy, empty country, where the conditions, hard though they might be, would at least be better than in cells and hulks at home. Cook's New South Wales was chosen as the scene,

and the first expedition landed in 1788. For more than a century Europe had known that there were vast lands awaiting her colonization in the south, but this enterprise of 1788 was the first attempt of any European nation to use the opportunity.

The Napoleonic Wars

Scarcely was British Australia begun when Great Britain, with Europe, was plunged into a war that lasted more than twenty years, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic War. In that struggle all Europe's colonies were involved, and British sea power had many of them at its mercy. Great Britain, however, had no desire for a general conquest of foreign colonies. The most fruitful of those seized in the war, such as Java and the French West Indies, were given back at the peace. Others, mainly useful as naval bases, such as Malta, Mauritius, Ceylon, and Capetown, were retained; and for the last-mentioned the British paid the Dutch an indemnity.

Changing Economic Interests of Britain

As the eighteenth century gave place to the nineteenth the position of Great Britain was different from that of any other nation. Hitherto she had competed with the other sea powers in seeking for supplies of lucrative products like tobacco and sugar, and had made profit by selling them to countries which had no oceanic trade of their own. Now her interests, and hers alone, were changing. She was no longer concerned chiefly with buying and selling, but with making and selling; for she was the first country to engage in large-scale industrialism.

While she was fighting Napoleon her population grew and her factories multiplied their output. The merchant had desired colonies, whose trade he might monopolize. For the manufacturer this was not enough. The world was his market, and particularly the teeming tropical world, from Canton and India to Africa and Peru. There he might sell his textiles and his metal goods; there he might buy his raw materials. No one could think of seizing and owning all this. The keys to its trade were peace, civil intercourse, and ships. Britain sought only ports of call, and naval bases for defence of her merchant shipping.

Growth of Open Trade and Liberalism

With the world as market, colonial monopolies seemed less important, and British monopolies steadily gave place to open trade. At first a few free ports were opened in the West Indies to which ships of all nations might resort. Then the Americans of the United States were made free of all the British West Indies, and in 1825 William Huskisson at the Board of Trade opened all British colonies to foreigners who would open theirs to us. Meanwhile George Canning as Foreign Secretary was using the British fleet as a shield of liberty. The Spanish colonies in South America had declared their independence and opened their ports to the world's trade. Canning, with Monroe of the United States, stood firm against the Bourbon monarchies who threatened reconquest.

The new liberalism was seen not only in politics and economics but also in social progress. The

greatest blot upon European empire-building had been slavery and the slave-trade. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century a few Englishmen began to attack the trade, and William Wilberforce became their leader. The fight against greed and ignorance was slow, and was destined to endure for his life. In 1807, while the war with Napoleon was at its height, Parliament passed the Act abolishing the slave trade. To sacrifice a profitable trade in the midst of a great war was a bold step, but it fell short of the reformers' desires. Not until 1833, when Wilberforce lay on his death-bed, did the Act pass which set free all slaves held under the British flag. With one honourable exception, Great Britain was the first country both to stop the trade and free the slaves. The exception was Denmark.

Growing Population and Emigration

While industrialism was changing the interests of England in the world, the population of the British Isles began to increase very rapidly. In the century from 1750 to 1850 it was much more than doubled, and thereafter the growth continued at a rate almost as remarkable. It affected town and country alike. The townsmen could be absorbed into expanding industry, but the land could employ only a limited number of the countrymen, and the others had to move. Some went to the factories, but many emigrated, and this caused developments in the colonial empire which statesmen neither expected nor desired.

From England, Scotland, and Ireland the emigrants went forth. They were not military con-

querors, but men seeking to make their living in peace, and in general it may be said that they went only where there was room for them. Certainly they evicted no fellow European from his holding of the earth's soil. On the other hand, they barred no stranger from theirs: during all the emigrating period the British colonies were freely open to the world. Many of the emigrants, including most of the Irish, went to the United States and ceased to be British subjects. The rest went to Canada, where they reinforced the Loyalists' Ontario and made ready for the thrust across the prairie to the West in later years; to Australia, where they swamped the experiment in convict reform in New South Wales, and started new settlements at many other points on the coast-line; and to South Africa and New Zealand, concerning each of which some further explanation must be made.

South Africa

At the conclusion of the Napoleonic War the British had retained Capetown as a port of call for ships sailing east and a naval base for their protection. A small colonial population dwelt round Capetown, composed of descendants of Dutch emigrants and of Huguenots from France. In the early nineteenth century these settlers increased in numbers, as did all European stocks, and their more adventurous members roved farther and farther afield in search of land for farms. To them was added an English element, not only in the officials and business men of Capetown, but also in an agricultural settlement planted in eastern Cape

Colony in the hitherto unoccupied province of Albany. These 'settlers of 1820' were the ancestors of the British stock in South Africa.

The British Government allowed the Albany settlement as an exceptional undertaking, but in general it did not desire the enlargement of the Cape Colony. It fixed limits beyond which it forbade expansion, but in vain. The Boers or Afrikaners, still multiplying, demanded new areas. They disliked British officialdom, and in religious views they differed strongly from the British missionaries who sought to convert the Kaffir peoples. After years of bickering the forward party among the Afrikaners broke bounds and set forth in the Great Trek of 1836. Some entered Natal, but ultimately left it to the British. Others crossed the Orange River and the Vaal and founded the Orange Free State and the Transvaal, which Britain in time recognized as independent republics. The Great Trek was primarily a quest for land, and secondly a flight from government, not merely from British rule, but rule of any sort; for the self-reliant men of the republics had a rooted dislike of paying taxes and sometimes yielded scant obedience to the presidents whom they themselves elected.
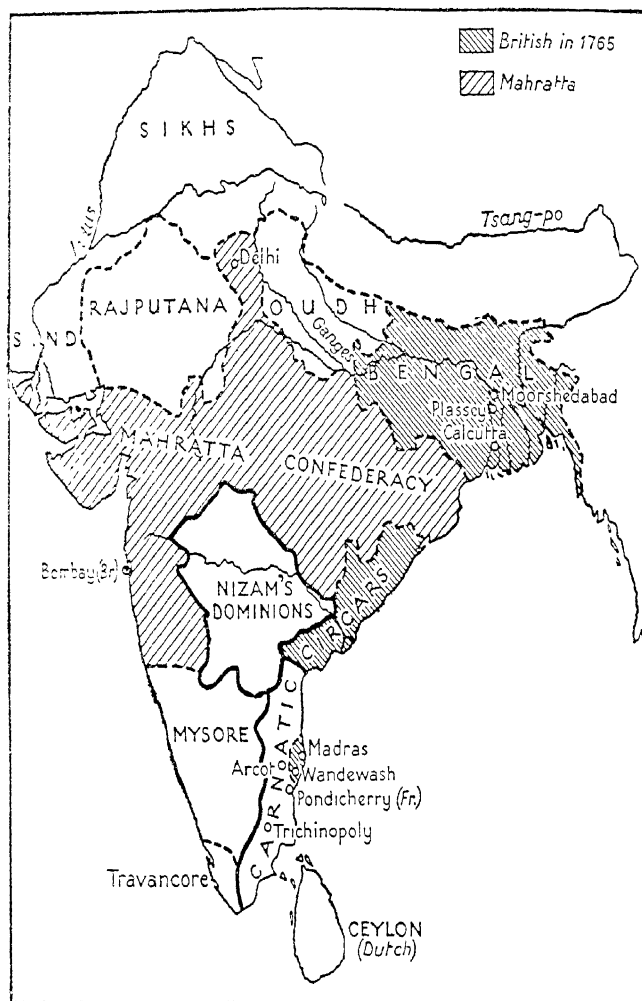
New Zealand

In very different surroundings, New Zealand was another example of spontaneous colonization by British subjects against the wish of the British Government. The twin islands were thinly occupied—in large areas not occupied at all—by the vigorous, intelligent Maori people, whose tribal

wars kept their numbers low in proportion to the size of the country.

It was inevitable that expanding, restless Europe should break in upon this primitive scene. Missionaries went there early in the century, and they were earnest that no other white men should be allowed to intrude upon their converts. But other white men did. Escaped convicts from New South Wales, runaway sailors from French, American, and British ships, speculative traders in liquor and firearms, all sorts of shady characters, began to settle among the Maori, upon whom they wrought much harm. Upon Great Britain, established a thousand miles away in New South Wales, the duty of restoring order clearly fell. British statesmen were slow to acknowledge it, until at length their hands were forced. In England the energetic Gibbon Wakefield, intent upon finding homes for his surplus fellow-countrymen, formed the New Zealand Company in 1839 and began to send out emigrants. In a land without a recognized government their coming would have turned disorder into chaos, and the Colonial Office had to act. In 1840 it sent a Governor to proclaim annexation and strive to safeguard the interests of all parties. It was to prove no easy task.

Government's Dislike of New Settlement Colonies

British statesmen were quite honest in expressing dislike of acquiring new settlement colonies. They were intent on two things, the expansion of markets for British manufactures, and the reduction of expenditure upon armaments. To them the populous regions of southern Asia, the coast-lands of Africa,

INDIA IN THE TIME OF CLIVE

and the free peoples of America, North and South, appeared as the obvious markets. To the short view, infant colonies provided no such inducement, and moreover needed troops and ships-of-war for their defence. It was a reasonable and credible attitude a hundred years ago, however loudly German propaganda has sought to describe it as hypocritical in the altered conditions of to-day, when the colonies have grown into British peoples of a strength unimaginable to their founders. It is childish for Germans to complain of the lost opportunity, when they could have made such dominions for themselves had they been fit to do so.

India

In India the story differs greatly in its details, but contains the same element of uncontrollable events frustrating statesmanship. Pitt's India Act of 1784 forbade the Company to acquire new territory. But there were others to be reckoned with. India, since the collapse of the Mogul Empire, had become a play-ground for military adventurers, many of whom were not Indians, but warriors from the mountains of Afghanistan or European soldiers of fortune. In the south Haidar Ali had evicted the Indian dynasty of Mysore and ruled as a tyrant. In the central plateau the Mahrattas, gallant romantic cavaliers in outward show, were yet a scourge to the peasants and townsmen whom they plundered but made no effort to govern. Throughout the north Afghan and Persian soldiers fought for thrones at the expense of the trembling population. If England could have looked on unmoved, these warriors

would not have allowed it. They attacked, and England had to deal with them; first Mysore, then the Mahrattas, then the powers of the north. There was no possible frontier short of the mountains, and to them the British peace was at length extended, to the infinite benefit of India. It was hardly a conquest of the Indian peoples, but a conquest of their conquerors, a necessary stage towards the present process whereby India may be not only prosperous but free.

II. GROWTH

Free Trade

In the middle decades of the nineteenth century a partially restricted colonial trade gave place to completely free trade in the British Empire. Huskisson had negotiated only the reciprocal opening of colonies, and had repealed the Navigation Acts only so far as to allow foreign ships to enter colonial ports with the produce of their own countries. Foreigners had not been allowed to carry goods between one British port and another. In the years before and after 1850 a less cautious band of free traders held sway. They abolished all duties save a few on luxuries, retained purely for raising revenue; and in 1849 they repealed what was left of the Navigation Acts. Thenceforward the ships of all the world were completely free in every port of the British Empire in every class of trade. And when, somewhat later, the more advanced colonies began to impose duties for their own purposes, there was no discrimination, and they treated British and foreign importers alike. Richard Cobden, who took the lead in advancing

the free-trade policy, was convinced, not only that it would be a benefit to all mankind, but that, if Britain led the way, other countries would follow her example. Cobden was a manufacturer, but he was also a philanthropist, who believed that monopolies and restrictions were causes of war.

Self-Government

The colonies in the same period advanced far towards self-government. In 1839 Lord Durham wrote his famous *Report* on the political affairs of Canada. He advocated responsible government, the ruling of a colony by ministers dependent on the votes of its own inhabitants. In the ensuing years responsible government was established in Canada, whence it spread to Australia and New Zealand in 1855–6. In these countries the Colonial Office of Great Britain ceased to appoint the officials, and the Governor representing the Crown yielded active administration to the colonial Prime Minister elected by the popular vote.

Withdrawal of Troops from Free Colonies

Responsible government marked an advance in liberty. It provided also the solution of a military problem. The people of England disliked expenditure on armaments, and yet the Empire had needed considerable expenditure. The British Army had been split up in little garrisons and field forces all over the world, and only a minority of its troops had served at home. The dispersion was bad for training, and it grew increasingly dangerous as the century advanced; for militarism was growing in

Europe, and with the ascendancy of Bismarck a great and aggressive German army became a portent of evil to the world. Britain, which had been powerless to save Denmark in 1864, had to look to her defences, but a reorganization of her army was impossible unless it could be more closely concentrated. Under the old system the regular troops had been frequently engaged in colonial wars with native opponents. The mother country, who paid for the forces, kept control; and the colonists had often complained that their local difficulties were increased by the decisions of the distant Colonial Office. Under responsible government this ceased. Self-defence, at least against local enemies, was a function of a self-governing community. By about 1870 the regular garrisons had been withdrawn from the free colonies, which thenceforward took up the duty for themselves. The recall of most of the troops from the Cape Colony coincided with the introduction there of responsible government in 1872. It was followed by Cardwell's reform of the Army, directed chiefly to the maintenance of a strong force at home and of another in India.

Fears of Disruption

To many people who looked backward rather than forward, responsible government seemed to entail the disruption of the Empire. They argued that colonies which could do as they liked were in effect independent. Some regretted it, while seeing little hope of averting separation. Others, thinking mainly of trade, were inclined to welcome it. Why waste money, they said, on the services of a colonial

empire, when we might trade just as freely with these regions after they had become independent republics. It was a narrow view, which neglected human feelings, but for a time it was much in favour. It gained colour from reports of free speech in the free colonies, where political leaders were wont to criticize Great Britain in vigorous terms. Such talk looked like hostility, although it was mainly impatience, and those who took it at its face value were apt to forget that colonial politicians attacked one another in the same hearty fashion. Some British ministers were deceived into pessimism, but they held to their doctrine of liberty and allowed no thought of coercion. There should be no new War of Independence, and if the colonies meant to leave the Empire, they should go with goodwill. These fears proved to be but a passing phase, which ended about 1870. Overseas there was no real wish for separation. If there had been, it would have taken place.

Humanitarian and Missionary Movements

The humanitarian movement, which began with the attack upon the slave trade, has had increasing influence in the Empire from that time forward. A notable transaction to which it gave rise was the impeachment of Warren Hastings for alleged mis-government in India. The accusation was untrue, for Hastings was in reality a just and enlightened Governor-General who had the misfortune to make personal enemies among his English subordinates. These men were able to take advantage of ignorance of Indian affairs among members of Parliament, and

to incite well-meaning leaders like Edmund Burke
to charge Hastings with oppression. The significant
fact, however, was that, given the belief that there
had been oppression, the indignation against it was
extreme; and the trial served as an occasion to regis-
ter in plain terms the British determination to allow
no ill-doing in the dependent countries. Hastings
was acquitted, but tyranny was condemned.

In the last years of the eighteenth century the
great missionary societies were formed to spread
the teaching of evangelical Christianity among the
peoples whom it had not yet reached. Missionaries
went to South Africa and to New Zealand and the
smaller Pacific islands. They worked also in tropical
Africa and India. In the West Indies the negroes
were Christians, but missionaries found occupation
there in supporting the interests of the slaves against
their masters. Missionary policy developed with the
growth of the Empire. In the first generation the
missionaries were hostile to colonization. They
tried to keep any white men but themselves out of
New Zealand and the Pacific islands, and in South
Africa they sought to prevent the spread of settle-
ment beyond the original bounds of the colony.
The hope of the missionaries was at that time to
create Christian native states enjoying complete
independence. The hope faded. In South Africa
the Afrikaners trekked and overran the proposed
black belt which was to surround the white colony.
In the Pacific disorderly adventurers crowded into
the islands with gin and gunpowder to compete
with the Gospel. In face of the facts the missionaries'
policy had to be changed. Since native governments

could not be made strong enough to resist external forces, the missionaries began to favour annexation, for government of some sort was essential.

Tropical Africa

The career of David Livingstone bridges the two periods. In his early days in South Africa when he travelled for souls among the Kaffir peoples bordering on the Transvaal, he and his fellow missionaries regarded the Boer settlers as opponents of their work. In his later travels in East Africa he saw the horrors committed by the Arab slavers, who carried off the natives to the countries of the Middle East. Livingstone and his supporters realized that worse things could happen to native Africa than the white man's rule. The publication of his *Last Journals*, which followed his lonely death in the wilderness, made many good men in England understand that annexation in some circumstances might be a duty and a trust. They took up that duty, and the condition of East Africa to-day, compared with what Livingstone knew, shows that they were right.

British possessions in tropical Africa did not expand until the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. The abolition of the slave trade rendered the forts on the west coast hardly worth keeping. Some were abandoned, and some were kept mainly for the use of the naval patrol that watched for illegal slavers. Gradually a trade in vegetable products developed in place of the trade in human beings, but our West African interest long remained on a petty scale. The interior was for the most part unexplored.

The Scramble for Africa after 1880

During the century the new industrial methods that began in England spread through Europe. Raw materials and markets became the desire of France, Belgium, and above all, Germany. By 1870 Bismarck had made the Germans a mighty nation, which realized that power in the future would lie not only with the armies but with the factories. At the same time Livingstone and Stanley and many another were exploring the African interior. Africa, it seemed to ambitious nations, was the ideal dependent continent, weak enough to be conquered, rich enough to be worth conquering. That was one aspect of Africa. The other has already been noted, the sense of a duty to end barbaric evils. The result was the scramble for Africa that set in after 1880.

German Methods

British, French, and Germans grew active in West Africa. Stanley revealed the great Congo basin, and King Leopold II of Belgium formed an international association for its development. A Conference at Berlin in 1884–5 regulated the Congo question by making the region an independent state with Leopold at its head. The three Powers in West Africa settled their shares, of which Germany's was not the least. In East Africa, British and German missionaries followed in Livingstone's steps. A German of a different sort also appeared there, one Karl Peters, who toured the country inducing ignorant chiefs to make treaties which they did not understand, placing their people under German

control. Great Britain, through the agency of Sir John Kirk, was striving to preserve and civilize the rule of the Sultan of Zanzibar, whose subjects, without his consent, had been signing away his rights to Karl Peters. But Bismarck sent German warships to overawe the unfortunate Sultan, and the ultimate result was a partition of East Africa into British and German territories. The evidence of all these transactions is on record. It proves beyond doubt that Great Britain was not eager for expansion, that she took her moderate share only when partition was forced by Germany, and that she thought much of her duty as a trustee for preventing oppression.

Egypt

In Egypt, Britain and France, and afterwards Britain alone, took control of an ill-governed country and reformed it in every aspect. Egypt was never in any sense a British colony, and it was acknowledged throughout by British statesmen that the occupation was not intended to be permanent, but to end when the work was done, a pledge that has since been carried out. The Sudan, a chaos of warring tribesmen, was conquered and civilized by joint Anglo-Egyptian forces as the nineteenth century gave place to the twentieth. There the joint government continues. The land has known peace for forty years, and the people have grown in numbers and prosperity.

India in the Nineteenth Century

India shows also a record of peace in the later nineteenth century. The period of extension of

British control culminated with the Mutiny of the Bengal army in 1857, an explosion due to the stresses of the previous years. Thereafter India knew neither internal wars nor annexations, and the constructive improvement of society took their place. The assured peace, the growth of trade, and the large-scale measures against famine and disease combined to produce a material prosperity greater than India had known. With all this, a large number of her people remained very poor, but they were at least not subject to the wholesale calamities of the past. The improved conditions reduced death-rates and caused a steady rise of population.

Material improvement did not yield permanent contentment. Towards the end of the century restiveness against British rule became evident, not, as of old, in the military part of the population, but among the men of peace, the students, lawyers, and journalists. Under the lead of the Indian National Congress they demanded self-government. By slow stages a partially representative system was established through successive Indian Councils Acts before the outbreak of the Great War of 1914. In dealing with the Indian demand for reform, British policy was never reactionary. For the good of India, a country of many different peoples, castes, languages, and religions, it refused to make great changes hastily, but it was always ready for sober steps towards self-rule. Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy in 1885, regarded with sympathy the establishment of the Congress; and in the present century, although hot words have often proceeded from that body—themselves a proof that speech is free in

India—the real difference between it and the government has not been upon the ultimate object but upon the speed with which it is to be reached.

The Late Victorian Period

As we have seen, it was a common opinion in the years before 1870 that the colonial empire would break up. Statesmen believed that the colonies would desire separation, and they had no intention of resisting it. Gradually this was seen to be a mistake. Just as British governments had not promoted the emigration that made the new colonies, so they had not foreseen one of its effects, a sense of kinship and membership of a common civilization. This feeling made a bond between Great Britain and her colonies too strong to be shaken by any differences of opinion upon policy. Well before the end of the century it was quite clear that not one of the self-governing colonies had the slightest intention of exercising its liberty to withdraw.

The removal of pessimistic doubts made room for a mood of self-confidence that became too exuberant. The British were visibly improving Egypt. They were attacking barbarism in tropical Africa. They had made of Malaya, formerly a region of violence and oppression, a model group of civilized tropical states. Their greater colonies were prosperous and content. The world seemed to have reached an equilibrium in which the British position was unlikely to be assailed. That perhaps is a fair impression of the 1890's, the decade in which self-contentment reached its height in the pageantry

of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee—and received its warning in Kipling's *Recessional*.

South Africa and the Boer War

It was a dangerous mood, and the disillusion came in South Africa. With the discovery of gold in the Transvaal about 1886, that country became a scene of adventurous enterprise. The Transvaalers did not themselves work the gold, but they could not prevent speculators from all the world crowding in to try their fortune. Johannesburg, the new town of the goldfield, became a state within the state, and its denizens, the Uitlanders, were sourly regarded by the Afrikaners, whose fathers had trekked to escape from such contacts.

Meanwhile, British enterprise pushed north and rendered further trekking impossible. Cecil Rhodes formed the British South Africa Company to exploit the land that was to receive its name from his, Rhodesia. There the warlike Matabele had oppressed the subject Mashonas, and the coming of British rule was an improvement. But the methods of Rhodes's agents were high-handed. If they had shown more patience and sympathy with savages who were unable to grasp quickly the meaning of new things, the bloodshed of the Matabele war might have been averted. Rhodesia was a good work executed in something less than the best manner. The Transvaalers, who had cast eyes upon the territory themselves, resented its foundation, which closed their traditional road to freedom by a trek to the north.

Rhodes was a public-spirited man, but there was

a streak in his nature that did not accord with the older British tradition. It came out more markedly in his dealings with the Transvaal. The Uitlanders were an offence to the Boers, and the Boers oppressed the Uitlanders. Two civilizations, the industrial and the pastoral, were finding it impossible to live side by side. Paul Kruger, the Transvaal president and father of his people, saw their whole way of life in peril. Rhodes and the mine-owners saw their legitimate enterprise crippled by irritating rules and taxes. From their point of view the position was that the Uitlanders formed half of the Transvaal's population and provided nine-tenths of its revenue, and yet had no votes nor any political representation. Kruger and his people on their side viewed the whole undertaking as an undesired intrusion. At length Rhodes did an unprincipled thing. He plotted with the Uitlanders that they should rebel and be aided by an armed force which he should send in from British territory. This, the Jameson Raid, was a shameful failure, although it would have been a more shameful success. It caused disunion in England and hostility throughout the world, and poisoned all attempts to negotiate the Uitlander problem with Kruger. War followed a few years later, the South African War of 1899–1902.

The war, stubbornly fought by methods honourable to both sides, led to the only hopeful solution, the Union of South Africa, accomplished in 1909. Many events in the fighting humbled the complacency of the late Victorian period, but they produced a manful determination to take stock and

reform. On the real condition of the Empire the war threw a light that surprised many. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and British South Africa made the war their war, and sent their best to fight in it. The prophets of disintegration were confounded.

III. THE BEGINNINGS OF MATURITY

Dominion Status

After the South African War the ideas both of self-government and of imperial defence promoted the consolidation of small units into large, and the conception of dominion status as something higher than colonial status began to grow familiar. Canada indeed had led the way in this matter long before, when her provinces began to be confederated into the Dominion in 1867. The experiment had been a success, not least in promoting the settlement of the unpeopled prairies handed over to the Dominion by the Hudson's Bay Company, but the example was not quickly followed elsewhere.

At length the Australian colonies began to see that a central government would best serve many of their common interests. The Pacific Islands and their trade filled much the same place in Australian thoughts as the western prairies in Canadian, and a single authority was equally necessary to deal with them. Australians were alarmed by the distant threat (which has never yet grown imminent) of Asiatic intrusion, and by the accomplished fact of the German establishment in New Guinea, close to their shores. These things caused the six colonies to federate in the Australian Commonwealth of

1901. New Zealand had no need to federate, since she had long been a single state, and had enjoyed responsible government for half a century. In her case the title of Dominion, assumed in 1907, was a recognition of growth rather than of a new status.

In South Africa, after as before the war, the existence of four mutually independent governments, even when all were under the same flag, had many drawbacks. For the dividing frontiers were arbitrary, and the country was essentially a unity for most of the great purposes of government, such as transport, the social services, customs revenue, and native administration. At the peace of 1902 the Transvaal and the Orange Free State accepted British citizenship and were promised self-government. This system took shape in 1907, and a mood of reconciliation set in. South African leaders, and notably Botha of the Transvaal, took advantage of it to press for a consolidation. The Union of South Africa, achieved in 1909, added another to the roll of the Dominions.

Joseph Chamberlain and the Colonies

Joseph Chamberlain, Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903, was the mainspring of empire policy before and after the South African War. For that struggle he bore some responsibility, although it is untrue that he had any part in organizing the Jameson Raid. He believed that there should be some central policy to focus the strength of the free dominions, and he sought it in preferential tariffs, whereby each part of the Empire should favour the trade of the other parts as against that of foreigners.

The Dominions were willing, but Great Britain herself was not. Another thirty years were to pass before changing world conditions were to force her from her belief in free trade, and in 1903 Chamberlain made no progress.

But Chamberlain's greatest work was in the colonies which had not reached self-governing status. The West Indies had been languishing for a century under a succession of misfortunes—the growth of cane sugar upon less exhausted soil elsewhere, shortage of labour after emancipation, and finally, the introduction of the beet-sugar culture into Europe and the use of bounties by the continental Powers to thrust it into the market hitherto enjoyed by cane. Chamberlain induced his country to prohibit the import of bounty-fed sugar. He established colleges of tropical agriculture and medicine, in Africa as well as in the West Indies. He arranged that colonies should have loans at remarkably low interest for construction of harbours and railways. He promoted the establishment of steamship lines to market their produce. Chamberlain's rule marks the general recognition of what had long been true, that 'the sense of possession has given place to the sense of obligation'.

Colonial Policy since Chamberlain

After his time the Colonial Office continued the policy of active improvement. It was carried out in the spirit of trusteeship and by methods that preserved as much as possible of the local liberty suited to the social conditions. In tropical Africa the chiefs were in many places confirmed in their authority

and educated to use it for the benefit of their subjects. Tribal wars, slavery, and bloodthirsty religious rites gave place to the supervised magistracy of men who quickly appreciated the meaning of enlightened government. Side by side with this the Europeans of the colonial service organized education, medical care, and production for markets that were no longer local but world-wide. Perfection was not attained at once, nor ever has been, for the standard rises with achievement, and conditions that seemed advanced a generation ago would be poorly esteemed to-day. Africa, Malaya, and the Pacific colonies have become regions for moderate satisfaction. The West Indies have been less happy. In them Chamberlain's reforms introduced a better period, but the deterioration of world trade in recent years has hit them hard, and a radical reorganization, it may be hoped, is one of the first tasks of the peace that must succeed the present war.[1]

The Empire and the World War 1914–18

Self-advertisement or propaganda is distasteful to many British minds, but in some conditions it has a justifiable value. Self-criticism was much more frequently heard in the British world before 1914, and it had an unfortunate effect upon German calculations. To the German ruling caste criticism meant disloyalty, and they could not believe that there was any strength or cohesion in this free-speaking, tolerant empire. They expected to see it

[1] Since these words were written, it has been announced that West Indian reform is not to await the end of the war, but is to be taken in hand at once.

dissolve like a bubble in the blast of war, and this undoubtedly increased their readiness to make war. They were undeceived. Canada put half a million men into the field, Australia and New Zealand between them another half-million, India in spite of her relative poverty a million, South Africa a high proportion of her scanty numbers; and everywhere in the colonies men of every colour flocked to enlist. Germany looked for England to be hampered by an imperial liability and found her strengthened by a splendid comradeship. What things the troops of the Empire did, the Germans know. The occupation of all the German colonies was a mere incident in their four years' fight. 'To the last man and the last shilling' was the word in 1914, and 1918 saw it made good.

After the peace the German colonies became mandates of Great Britain, France, and the British Dominions, and their peoples entered a world from which they may look to march forward but have no wish to step back. This at least is well known, and no free man who is acquainted with the German record in Africa believes that it would be anything but a crime to return these peoples to Germany.

India since the War

The fighting men of India had done their share, and her political leaders no less. They had loosed sharp tongues and pens in time of peace, but war altered the scale of values. 'We, the representatives of the Indian people', they said in 1914, 'desire to assure Your Excellency of our unswerving loyalty to the Crown and of our firm resolve to stand by the

Empire in this crisis. . . . We are loyal because we are patriotic; because we believe that with the stability and permanence of British rule are bound up the best prospects of Indian advancement.' The obligation was incurred by Britain, and it has been honoured. The Government of India Act of 1919 set up a fully representative government, and, in some spheres, a responsible government. It was avowedly a transitional measure, to be reviewed after the lapse of years. With peace, criticism arose again, often bitter and unmeasured, but India has advanced. The Act of 1935, a radical extension of self-government, is now coming into practice, and dominion status is assured.

The Empire after the Statute of Westminster

The Dominions had fought as mature nations, they signed the peace treaties as independent states, and their position as such, 'equal in status, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown', has been regularized by successive transactions, culminating in the great Statute of Westminster of 1931. The term 'empire' has grown to appear misleading as a description of their relations with the mother-country, and 'British Commonwealth' has taken its place. The present war is demonstrating the Commonwealth's solidity.

The Dominions are nations complete in every sense of the word and with completely independent governments. They have their own Ministers Plenipotentiary, where necessary, in foreign states. They maintain touch with England by means of resident High Commissioners in London. Every four years,